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Understanding Uniqueness of Sri Devi Stotras

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Hymns and Slokas in praise of Deities and divine mother are treasure trove bestowed on us by our illustrious ancient ascetics, Rishis and Acharyas. While chanting them, if we decipher the meaning of each line and also interpret why a particular word is used and the context of its usage in the hymn, the essence and uniqueness of these hymns become clear. This understanding is all the more astounding when you chant the slokas of divine mother (Sri Devi).

With my limited knowledge, whatever I could understand, I attempt to present in this article, the greatness of divine mother through the interpretation of hymns.

While praising the Divine mother in Kanakadhara Stotram, Sri Adisanakracharya, refers to Mother as follows:

दिग्घस्तिभिःकनककुम्भमुखावसृष्ट
स्वर्वाहिनीविमलचारुजलप्लुताङ्गीम्।
प्रातर्नमामिजगतांजननीमशेष
लोकाधिनाथगृहिणीममृताब्धिपुत्रीम्

To express and highlight the uniqueness and greatness of divine mother, Adi Sankara used an excellent phrase “लोकाधिनाथगृहिणीम्” (Lokaadhinaatha GrihiNeem) in the last line. Why is this phrase used? In fact, other phrases like लोकाधिनाथपत्नीम(Lokaadhinaatha parneem)लोकाधिनाथजायाम (Lokaadhinaathe jayaam) could have also been used without compromising on the meaning and the meter. Why did not Adi Sanakra use these phrases?

With the use of the word “GrihiNi”, Adi Sanakara gives altogether a different dimension and interpretation of ‘wife’! The word “GrihiNi’ not only means wife but also goes beyond this wordexpanding the scope and divine mother’s benevolence and gracefulness. The word “GrihiNi’ refers to an effective and benevolent manager of the entire household! Thus, the word bestows “lordship’ or a sort of ‘ownership’

And also, one should note that the divine mother is “GrihiNi” of Lord of the Universe (Lokaadhinaarha) leading to further interpretation of the term as the benevolent manager of the entire Universe! Thus, the divine mother not only manages the affairs of all of us but also of the Lord by virtue of being referred to as GrihiNi! Such is the Uniqueness of the divine mother “Amma”!

Another hymn on the divine mother. This sloka is familiar to all of us and is normally chanted along with Sri Lakshmi Ashottara Stotram.

लक्ष्मींक्षीरसमुद्रराजतनयांश्रीरङ्गधामेश्वरीम्।
दासीभूतसमस्तदेववनितांलोकैकदीपाङ्कुराम्॥

श्रीमन्मन्दकटाक्षलब्धविभवद्-ब्रह्मेन्द्रगङ्गाधराम्।
त्वांत्रैलोक्यकुटुम्बिनींसरसिजांवन्देमुकुन्दप्रियाम्॥

To express and highlight the uniqueness and greatness of divine mother, an excellent phrase "त्रैलोक्यकुटुम्बिनींम्" (Trailokya KuTumbineem) is used in the last line.
The use of this single phrase "त्रैलोक्यकुटुम्बिनींम्", brings out very elegantly, the monumental divine quality of Mother. She has to look after the family as large as three worlds (Trilokya KuTimbineem). Her family includes Mukund (Lord Sri Vishnu) also. Her status as the head of the family of three worlds is so nicely brought out by use of this single phrase त्रैलोक्यकुटुम्बिनींम्. Here again, the word bestows "lordship' or a sort of 'ownership'. Another beautiful exposition of Divine mother's benevolence is seen in the third line of the above hymn:श्रीमन्मन्दकटाक्षलब्धविभवद्-ब्रह्मेन्द्रगङ्गाधराम्. It is only through the bestowing of her benevolent gracious looks on Brahma, Indra and Gangadhara Siva that they attain their glory! Even the deities long for divine mother's grace and blessings!

One more reference to the status of divine mother as mother of all worlds is seen in Mahishasura Mardini Stotram. Adi Sankara expresses his obeisance to the divine mother as follows:

अयि गिरिनन्दिनि नन्दितमेदिनि विश्वविनोदिनि नन्दिनुते
गिरिवरविन्ध्यशिरोऽधिनिवासिनि विष्णुविलासिनि जिष्णुनुते।
भगवति हे शितिकण्ठकुटुम्बिनि भूरिकुटुम्बिनि भूरिकृते
जय जय हे महिषासुरमर्दिनि रम्यकपर्दिनि शैलसुते ॥१॥

Adi Sankara, while describing the status of the divine mother says, She is not only the concert of the blue throated Siva (शितिकण्ठकुटुम्बिनि), She is also the benefactor of the Universe! Adi Sankara uses the phrase "भूरिकुटुम्बिनि"to emphasize that divine mother's family is the vast Universe.

Thus, each and every hymn (Stotram) emphasises and highlights the enduring gracious power of the divine mother. In fact, they go one step further to declare that divine mother is the primordial source (related to Atma) of the Troika of Brahma, Vishnu and Maheswara. This aspect is clearly seen in Sri Lakshmi Ashtottara Stotram.

नवदुर्गांमहाकालींब्रह्मविष्णुशिवात्मिकाम्।
त्रिकालज्ञानसम्पन्नांनमामिभुवनेश्वरीम्॥

The most potent phrase ब्रह्मविष्णुशिवात्मिकाम् (Brahma vishNu Sivaatmikaam) is used to describe the greatness of divine mother. She is related to the soul (Atma) of the Troika of Brahama, VishNu and Siva. Soul or Atma is indestructible, imperishable! Thus, the very soul of Troika deities is divine mother!

Going further, Adi Sanakara, in Annapuranshtakam declares that the divine mother is the primordial source of this Universe.

दृश्यादृश्यविभूतिवाहनकरी ब्रह्माण्डभाण्डोदरी

लीलानाटकसूत्रभेदनकरी विज्ञानदीपाङ्कुरी ।
श्रीविश्वेशमनःप्रसादनकरी काशीपुराधीश्वरी
भिक्षां देहि कृपावलम्बनकरी मातान्नपूर्णेश्वरी

Divine mother is ब्रह्माण्डभाण्डोदरी meaning the entire Universe is like a cosmic egg embedded in the divine mother's womb. Thus, She is the real and only source of the entire Universe. The entire creation is due to that divine mother only. Creation does not mean only the physical world as we see, but includes the three worlds as She is referred to as Trilokya kuTimbini ("त्रैलोक्यकुटुम्बिनीं"). That means Divine mother is the root source for all the deities including the Troika of Brahma, VishNu and Maheswara. Not only that She is the custodian of all the three events namely Srishti (creation), Sthithi (sustainability) and laya (annihilation) and appears in all the three forms as necessary.

It is not possible to give a definite appearance to the divine mother. How can She be visualized? The answer to this is found in the 7th Adhyaya of Sri Madbhagavad Gita. Lord Krishna says:

योयोयांयांतनुंभक्तःश्रद्धयार्चितुमिच्छति।
तस्यतस्याचलांश्रद्धांतामेवविदधाम्यहम्

Whatever celestial form a devotee seeks to worship with faith, I steady the faith of such a devotee in that form.

This preaching of the Lord is very crucial and important. Whether Annapurna, Lakshmi, Parvati, Durga or any other deity, whomsoever we have in our mind's eye is the divine mother. Suffice to say divine mother could be even our own mother firmly established in our mind (inner eye). First, we have our mother's image, then a bright illumination and subsequently a twilight seen just after morning showers filling us with a feeling of peace, tranquility and serenity.

Swasti. Peace to one and all